



THE "BEAR" FACTS

SPRING 2005

An update from the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program

Director's Message



Welcome to the first issue of *The Bear Facts* e-newsletter designed to keep you informed of what's happening at Grizzly Youth Academy.

We think you'll find the newsletter a quick and easy way to stay on top of the many activities and events involving our cadets in the program on campus and in the surrounding area. We want to stay in touch with our friends, supporters and the families of our students as well as reach out to individuals and organizations who work with at-risk youth in various parts of the state.

We truly believe that our program provides a unique opportunity for at-risk youth to turn their lives around. It is rated the most cost-effective, efficient and successful program for at-risk youth in the United States. The program nationally has graduated nearly 56,000 students since 1993 and is currently operating in 24 states and Puerto Rico.

GYA opened its doors in 1998 with great anticipation. In January 1999, our first graduating class of 73 students completed the residential phase of the program and proudly walked across the stage. For many graduates, this was a life-long dream come true. Since then, 1,350 cadets have completed the rigorous academic program and gone on to lead successful lives.

In addition to academic excellence, cadets gain leadership skills, job training and life skills, and take part in a strong mentorship program. My entire staff at Grizzly, from the teachers to the cadre to the administration, are committed to our mission of helping youth excel academically and in life. We look forward to sharing our success stories with you and welcome any thoughts or comments you may have.

Lt. Col. Nancy Baird
Director, Grizzly Youth Academy

Desmond Goes To Washington

About two years ago, Desmond Vaughn thought he had nowhere to go. He had a father who dealt drugs and stole. His world had fallen apart with the death of his grandmother and he was depressed, felt alone, unloved and hopeless. Then he found the Grizzly Youth Academy and began a new life, pursuing his dreams, believing in himself and setting a course to achieve his goals.

This past March, Cadet Vaughn traveled to Washington D.C., along with California National Guard Youth Program staff, to share stories of success and second chances with members of Congress.

Desmond joined cadets who were representing the programs from other states and also met and mingled with NBA superstar John Salley, who serves as the national spokesperson for the National Guard's Youth ChalleNGe Program. Salley is also a popular Fox Sports talk show host.



Cadet Vaughn says the ChalleNGe Program served as a parent to him and he is forever grateful. He is now a student at Cuesta Community College, working toward a degree in criminal justice. He is also a peer mentor for the Grizzly Youth Academy's new cadets and has submitted an application to become a member of the California State Military Reserve.

Desmond Vaughn is motivated and is on the road to success. His recent visit to Washington D.C. was one of the stops along the way and provided him with both knowledge and inspiration. Good luck to Desmond and may his journey continue.

Legislative Update

Momentum and hope are building for the future expansion of California's Youth ChalleNGe Program, according to Col. James Gabrielli, Director of Youth Programs, California National Guard. Col. Gabrielli spends a considerable amount of time seeking support and additional funding to improve and grow the program in the State. He recently received approval to expand the Grizzly Youth Academy at Camp San Luis Obispo from 200 students per year to 300 students.

"This means we'll be able to reach out to an additional 100 of California's high school dropouts who are looking for a second chance to put their lives back together," Col. Gabrielli points out. "It means we can help more of our at-risk youth."

The other positive development is approval to add a *second* Youth ChalleNGe Program in California. The Office of the Secretary of Defense and the National Guard Bureau have set aside \$ 1.8 million in Department of Justice funding to establish a second program if the State is willing to meet the 40 percent match requirement. "I really believe that California's strong legislative efforts, and support for this program as a whole, were the main reasons we were selected for program expansion and growth opportunities," Col. Gabrielli said enthusiastically.

Legislative Update (cont. from front page)

The Director's efforts are currently focused on obtaining Congressional support for HR 669, introduced by Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC) and the companion bill S. 515 introduced by Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV). These bills would amend Title 32 of the U.S. code to, among other things, increase the maximum federal share of the costs for state National Guard Youth ChalleNge programs. These efforts are producing positive results and, to date, the list of California's congressional delegation who have "signed on" in support of this bill include representatives Lois Capps, Xavier Becerra, Loretta Sanchez, Ken Calvert, Susan Davis, Jane Harman, Anna Eshoo, Ellen Tauscher, Linda Sanchez, Juanita Millender-McDonald and Grace Napolitano.



As part of our Youth ChalleNge Program Public Awareness Campaign, Col. Gabrielli took his case to the airwaves and appeared on 30 minute cable TV show hosted by State Senator Bob Margett. The show airs in Southern California which would be the likely location of the potential second ChalleNge program. Various sites are being considered as support is growing on both the federal and state level. Dream it, believe it, and achieve it.

A Strong Start Toward a Magnificent Finish

Our students are past the half way point in the Challenge residential phase. Their minds have cleared, they're accustomed to the structured environment the academy provides and they've found themselves in a predictable environment and are focusing on goals.

The change process has taken off. Students who've previously exhibited very poor study habits, study skills, and low achievement see themselves in a whole new light. Educationally, they are actively engaged in Composition and Literature courses aimed at raising their literacy levels, research skills, and their ability to communicate. The high quality of instruction given to the students is fostering their ability to master Algebra and to think critically and analytically about the history of the United States. Additionally they are demonstrating healthy life styles through identifying their eating and exercise habits and making conscious choices around them.

The Academy also selected and acknowledged the students of the month for April. Students of the month are selected based on their class readiness and academic achievement - that is, the attitude with which they approach class and the behavior they exhibit, along with the academic gains they are making. These students are rewarded in front of the entire company with a ribbon and held as exemplar students that typify how Grizzly students should model themselves.

We are all very proud of what the students are experiencing and the progress they are making. Personal change is the reason they enrolled in the Academy and they are off to a great start!

Paul Piette
Principal

Grizzly Drill Team Takes Third Place in Competition

With only a few weeks to practice, the **Grizzly Drill Team** faced some stiff competition at the recent California Cadet Corps Drill Team competition held in Pacoima. On March 19, 2005, they proved that they had what it takes. Even competing against many experienced drill teams who have been together for years, Grizzly took third place in the Platoon Drill Division. We are very proud of these young men and women who had the confidence to enter this event *and* win third place. **Go Grizzly!**

Second Chance



You don't get too many
second chances
Before your life collapses
and crashes
But for me....I got lucky.
I found the Grizzly Youth

Academy

My life was going nowhere
It was only a matter of time
Before I ended up in jail or in a coffin
6 feet deep somewhere
But I got a second chance
A chance to prove myself
A chance to lookout for only me and no
one else.

To get away from the streets,
To get away from street dudes ducking
and dodging police
To get away from home.

It's a hard road ahead but I have to face
it alone.

To be my own man and let me be free
Not to take the life that the ghetto had in
store for me
To teach me the discipline that I need,

To grow to be a man and really succeed.
I thank God and Grizzly because now I
have a second chance.

Cadet Dana Eubanks, 2nd Platoon

Family and Mentor Day

Family/Mentor Day in April was a day filled with family, friends, good food and fun. Family members brought their cadet's favorite foods and also got their fill of chili in the GYA's famous "chili cook-off".

There were games for the little ones and the cadets took part in one of their favorite pastimes... dunking the cadre! All in all, it was a *fun* fund-raising event, and we look forward to seeing our friends and families again next year!



Two GYA Cadets Featured In PSA



Two graduates from the Grizzly Youth Academy were recently chosen to participate in the taping of GYA's first ever TV Public Service Announcement.

Cadets **Mercedes Borrayo** and **Michael Lombardo** delivered heartwarming "on camera" testimonials and shared their personal experiences on how the program has changed their lives.

Due for release in June 2005, the PSA was video-taped at GYA in San Luis Obispo and in East Los Angeles. Assisted by Homeboy Industries which helped achieve a true neighborhood street scene, Mercedes and Michael spoke with feeling and sincerity.

Their sincere statements enhanced the quality of this video production and reinforced our message and our success with at-risk youth.

Congratulations on a job well done and best of luck in your future.

For More information

For additional information or to request an application, please visit our Website at:
www.ngycp.org/CA

You can call or write us at:
California National Guard's
Youth ChalleNGe Program
P.O. Box 3209, Bldg. 721
Camp San Luis Obispo, CA
93403-3209

Tel: (805) 782-6880
Fax: (805) 782-6885

Call us toll free
1-800-926-0643

Student Council Officers Elected

Student council elections for Grizzly Youth Academy Class XIV were held on March 4th. Campaigns were friendly but fierce as eight candidates vied for the two positions of President and Vice-President. After listening to rousing pre-election campaign speeches given by each candidate, the student body voted for their choices.

The newly elected Officers are: President - Cadet **Desmond Saunders** and Vice President - Cadet **Adriana Bernal** Platoon Representatives to the Student Council:

Platoon A: Cadet **Darnell Bumpus**

Platoon B: Cadet **Dana Eubanks**

Platoon C: Cadet **Eli Amaya**

Platoon D: Cadet **Adriana Bernal**

Congratulations to all candidates and to the new officers!



Grizzly Students Attend National ChalleNGe Meeting

Earlier this year, National Guard Youth ChalleNGe directors, counselors, cadres, resource managers and others working with youth in the program, met in San Diego for their annual meeting entitled "Impact: Putting the Tools to Work." Discussions focused on the many sides of operating a Youth ChalleNGe Program including program overview and successes, program costs and funding challenges, and national and state legislative efforts to increase the federal share of the cost of the program.

The four days of seminars are designed to provide an opportunity for those working in the ChalleNGe program to discuss common issues or concerns, hear from experts on how to effectively address those concerns and get recharged for another year of their important work.



One of the highlights of the gathering for Grizzly cadets was the closing ChalleNGe Program Annual Awards Dinner. Five cadets participated in the presentation of the colors to a packed dinner crowd, performing superbly and making GYA staff proud. Our hats off to the cadets!

Grizzly Alumni – Let Us Hear From You!

We'd like to stay in touch with cadets who have graduated from GYA since the program began in 1998. We'd like to hear how you're doing in school, on the job or any other success or milestone in your life that you'd like to share with others.

Please contact **Suzy Elwell** at (805) 782-6886 or write to her at P.O. Box 3209 Camp San Luis Obispo, CA 93403-3209. We'd really like to hear from you!

Upcoming Events

May 27th – May 30th Homepass
June 9th – "Dining In" for students
June 15th Prom
June 17th Graduation!

**GYA is accepting applications
for the next class which begins
July 17, 2005.
DEADLINE: JUNE 10TH**